

## SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

crucified," a letter full of the same spiritual poetry that impregnates the story of Piccarda in Dante's *Paradiso*;<sup>1</sup> or to the Dominican nun of Orvieto, Suora Daniella, "who, not being able to continue her great works of penance, had come into great affliction," on the holy virtue of discretion;<sup>2</sup> she can address to a harlot in Perugia, "with desire of seeing thee partake of the blood of the Son of God," a letter as outspoken as tender in expression, beginning and ending in the name of *Maria doL Madre*\*

Some of these letters are purely mystical, ecstatic outpouring of Catherine's heart, the translation into ordinary speech of the conversation of Angels, overheard in suprasensible region. Such are pre-eminently the letters to Fra Raimondo, and, in lesser degree, that to Suora Bartolommea della Seta, a nun of Pisa.<sup>4</sup> Others are a nearer approach to familiar domestic correspondence, in which the daily needs of life become ennobled, and even the innocent jape of her friends and followers is not neglected. Among these are the letters to Stefano Maconi; but even more delightful examples are to be found in those sent Francesco di Pippino and Monna Agnese, so sadly curtailed and mutilated in all the printed editions, letters as full of his spirituality as of homely common-sense.<sup>6</sup> Some are written guides to men and women through all the snares of the world, the trials of the religious vocation. Conspicuous among the latter are the numerous letters Catherine addressed to Carthusians and monks of Monte Oliveto, towards which orders, next to her own beloved Dominicans, she evidently felt the greatest affection. Among the former, we have those to Andrea di Vanni, to

<sup>1</sup> Letter 79 (149).

<sup>2</sup> Letter 213 (163).

<sup>3</sup> Letter 276 (373). For another instance of Catherine's large-hearted out-

upon questions of this kind, see Letter 8 (82), on the admission of a youth of illegitimate birth into the Olivetan order.

<sup>4</sup> Letter 221 (152).

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix, Letters V. and VI., which, however, are in a different key. <sup>6</sup> For Catherine's relations with the Olivetani, cf. Placido M. Lugano, *On the Primordial Order of Monte Beato*, pp. 157-164.